



La Voz

Newsletter of the National Organization of Professional Hispanic
Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees

February 2004

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A Message from Vice President Carmen Diaz

Please pay your dues for 2004. Contact your Regional Representative and provide your method of payment and update your personal information, i.e. your address, email, etc.

In order to maintain an accurate membership list, we need your assistance.

Nomination ballots will be coming out in March. To be able to nominate or to be nominated, members must be in good standing, which means that dues for 2004 must be paid by February 29, 2004. Thank you.

It's That Time of the Year Again!

*By Rachel Lopez,
Membership Chair*

The 2003 membership dues expired on December 31, 2003, which means that dues for the 2004 calendar year are now due.

It is important that we pay our annual dues to our organization.

These dues help subsidize the cost for our 2004 conference scheduled June 22-24, 2004, in Sacramento, California, and to cover other important activities carried out by NOPHNRCSE.

There are ways you can submit payment of your annual dues: 1)

submitting a check for the amount of the membership you chose along with a completed membership form, or 2) by payroll deduction. Form AD-1054 - Request for Payroll Deductions is also available with the membership form. Please remember that I still need a completed membership form and a copy of AD-1054, if you chose to go with option 2.

Membership forms are available on-line at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/>.

Rachel's mailing address is 430 G. Street, #4164, Davis, CA 95616-4164.

12th NOPHNRCSE Annual Training Conference Save the date: June 22-24, 2004 Sacramento, California

By Carmen Ortiz, Conference Planning Chairperson

Planning for the 2004 training conference is moving along. With all the new technology being deployed to the field, our conference will feature workshops to address your training needs. This is a short list of what we are planning:

- ArcGIS
- Outlook and XP
- Trends in GIS technology: Orthoimagery, Web Soil Survey
- New developments in Information Technology
- GPS Technology in the field
- Farm Bill

We are also providing workshops on diversity, personal development, and the NRCS reorganization. A draft program will be posted on our website in the coming weeks

So, save the date: June 21-24, 2004 in Sacramento, CA. For the latest information on the conference visit our website at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/>.



Two new minority pilot scholarship programs will be available in 2004.

2004 Scholarship Applications

*By Amanda Hasemeier,
Scholarship and Endowment
Fund Committee,
Chairperson*

Action Required by: April 15, 2004

The scholarship and endowment fund committee has announced the 2004 application process has begun.

Five scholarships for \$500 each will be awarded

to students studying natural resources related subjects. One scholarship for \$500, the Martha Guerra Arteaga Scholarship for Communications, will be awarded to one female student studying communications and/or public affairs.

If you have questions please contact Amanda at 717-237-2236 or Sharyn Alvarez at 202-720-2771.

New Minority Scholarship Programs

NRCS Chief Bruce Knight has announced two new minority pilot scholarship programs for 2004.

"These scholarship opportunities help attract outstanding students from underrepresented groups to pursue careers in agriculture and natural resource sciences. Through workforce planning and scholarship programs, we are creating a more effective government by attracting and educating students from diverse backgrounds to be quality employees by ensuring that they have the skills to perform at high levels," Knight said.

The new pilot Asian and Pacific Islander (API) Scholarship Program will offer scholarships to U.S. citizens who are seeking a degree in agriculture or related natural resource sciences at universities with high percentages of Asian and Pacific Islander students in California, Hawaii, Minnesota and the Pacific Basin Area. The new Tribal Scholarship Program pilot will have similar eligibility requirements and be available to students at 1994 Tribal Land Grant Colleges.

Currently, NRCS participates in two USDA sponsored scholarship programs: the USDA/1890 National Scholars Program for students planning to attend an 1890 Historically Black Land Grant Institution; and the Public Service Leaders Scholarship, which is a joint effort between USDA, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities and the Hispanic College Fund, Inc.

Information on the new scholarship programs will be available soon at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov> or from Larry Holmes, NRCS Outreach Division Director, at 301-504-2229 or larry.holmes2@usda.gov. Information on the USDA/1890 National Scholars Program is at <http://1890Scholars.program.usda.gov>. Information on the Public Service Leaders Scholarship is at <http://www.hsi.usda.gov/Scholars/main.htm>.

NOPHNRCSE History

If you have collected NOPHNRCSE material in good condition and wish to donate it to our archives, please send it to Daniel Tafoya, USDA NRCS, 51 N. Vista #3, Holbrook, AZ 86025. Thanks.

East Region Report

By Angel Figueroa, Regional Representative

The East Region members have been active since our last national conference.

Melissa Rochford and Astrid Martinez have provided materials to us on 2003 Hispanic Heritage Month. Amanda Hasemeier continues to assist with committee work. I have been assisting the conference planning committee with conference approved paperwork.

The East Region members continue to pay their dues and are looking forward to our next conference and the opportunities that it brings.



Training Conference Call for Posters and Technical Papers

By Juan C. Hernández,
Chairperson, Natural Resources Committee

Action Required by: April 5, 2004

The Natural Resources Committee is calling for posters and technical papers for the annual training conference. The conference theme is "Bringing Diversity to the Nation's Conservation Needs." If you have been working on an innovative project or unique ways to outreach minority customers, please consider presenting a poster or a technical paper.

The selected presenters may attend at government time and expense, with approval from their supervisor. If you are interested in presenting a technical paper or a poster, please review the following instructions for submitting proposals and take part in the 2004 NOPHNRCSE Annual Training Conference.

Submit your
technical
paper/poster
abstracts by
April 5, 2004.

You may participate in one of two ways:

1. Oral Concurrent Presentations

Oral concurrent sessions will take place during this training conference. These presentations are opportunities to share the results of an outreach effort, conservation research projects, and/or lessons learned through professional experience with conservation projects, programs, and technologies. Each presenter will have 20 minutes to make the presentation and 5 to 10 minutes for questions and answers for a total of 30 minutes per presentation.

Please Note: The Natural Resources Committee will carefully review all submissions. To the extent possible, submissions not selected for oral presentations will be reviewed for presentation as posters.

2. Poster Presentations

Posters will be on display from Monday afternoon through Thursday afternoon. Presenters will be required to be at their display booths at specific times (to be determined) during which presenters will answer questions and explain their experiences and results to conference attendees. A poster presentation entails affixing printed materials (typed information, photos, graphs, etc.) to a poster/display board. Audiovisual equipment might be used but it will not be permitted to be the sole content of the poster presentation.

Timeline:

- April 5, 2004 - Deadline for submitting paper/poster abstracts
- April 9, 2004 - Acceptance letters will be mailed out.

Instructions for Submitting Proposals:

1. Proposals may be submitted in one of the following ways:
 - a. Email to: Juan.Hernandez@wi.usda.gov
 - b. Fax to: (920) 424-0341, attention: Juan Hernández
 - c. Mail to: Juan Hernández, USDA - NRCS, 625 County Road Y, Oshkosh, WI 54901-9624
2. Information required for paper and/or poster presentations include:
 - a. Title of presentation
 - b. Presenter's name, affiliation, address, phone, fax, and email
 - c. Contact person (if different from presenter) phone and email
 - d. Abstract of 200 words or less

For questions please contact Juan C. Hernández at (920) 424-0329, extension 101, or via email at Juan.Hernandez@wi.usda.gov.



Career Paths

Submitted by Sharyn Alvarez, Communications Chairperson

Previous editions of our newsletters have announced the selections of our members who are now state conservationists and deputy state conservationists in training and in the SES program. I asked them to share a few of the ways they choose to achieve success. Hopefully, you will find a gem that will help you in your path towards higher achievement. Here is what they said.

J.R. Flores, State Conservationist, North Dakota

I became a District Conservationist approximately 16 years ago and reached what I thought was my long-term goal. Shortly afterwards, I gazed into the future and saw myself as a state conservationist as my ultimate dream job. I then mapped out a strategy in order to achieve this long-term goal. This strategy included doing my very best with any job assignment given to me and with every position I held.

These are some of my key strategies:

1. Be mobile (I moved 10 times with NRCS)
2. Be flexible
3. Maintain a positive attitude (probably the most important)
4. Seek advice and guidance from leadership
5. Let leadership know what you are capable of
6. Apply for details, taskforces, and other committees
7. Gain multi-state experience
8. Network, Network, Network
9. Learn from your mistakes and try not to make them again
10. Be proactive and be willing to take chances
11. Stay focused
12. Keep your KSAs current and have a leadership person provide input
13. Stay motivated and learn how to motivate people
14. Have a strong belief in yourself and your capabilities
15. Don't let rejections get you down (I've had my share of them)
16. Last but not least, work hard and enjoy life

This strategy may not work for everyone, but this is how I achieved success. Never stop setting goals; they are achievable.

Carlos Suarez, Deputy State Conservationist (Development Position), Nebraska

Regardless of the position, the steps I have taken have been the same.

1) Always have a learning attitude - No matter what position you are in, you are always learning. Be open to new experiences, details, short-term assignments, trainings, OJT, etc. Be willing to learn new things that will benefit not only you but the agency.

2) Surround yourself with mentors - I have the blessing of three mentors who have guided and provided me support in my professional career. They have always been sincere and honest with me in providing guidance and advice. The relationship started as mentorship and I am honored to consider them my friends.

3) Be mobile - My first boss in West Virginia told me on my first day at the job, "You will have a better chance of advancing in your career with the agency if you are mobile." He was right. The agency has many opportunities for employees who are willing to move and take on new challenges.

4) Network - This is very important. Organizations such as NOPHNRCS, NOPBNRCS, and SWCS provide avenues for you to exchange ideas with other professionals and share your experiences. The person you network with may become your next supervisor or may be able to help you achieve your next career move.

5) Last but not least, ALWAYS seek the support of your family in any career decision you make. My wife and I have always discussed our career goals and moves. Now, we talk to our children. Each move you make affects the whole family and they should be considered when you think of making changes in your location.

"Never stop setting goals; they are achievable," said J.R. Flores, state conservationist, North Dakota



Long-Time NOPHNRCSE Member Leaves NRCS

"The biggest investment and asset should be our employees... in their continued effort on employee initiatives for the betterment of the agency," said Rebecca M. de la Torre, deputy director - Southwest Strategy.

*By Rebecca M. de la Torre,
Deputy Director - Southwest
Strategy*

Dear NRCS Colleagues
& Friends,

So long my friends! It is with a bittersweet feeling that I send you this message.

Prior to the holidays, I officially became a DOI employee. For the past year and a half, I have been on a detail to Southwest Strategy (a federal, state and tribal partnership collaborating for resolution of natural and cultural resources issues in Arizona and New Mexico) as their Deputy

Director. At the same time, I was pursuing my 401 educational requirements, on my own, at Arizona State University. I transferred permanently as the deputy director, a 401 position, in December.

I thank everyone in the agency who helped me learn, grow, and develop my stewardship ethic to conserve the land and help people. I would like to express my appreciation to those who supported me as a colleague, employee and the president of the

Hispanic employee organization.

I will continue to support the NRCS Hispanic organization and the other employee organizations... for the biggest investment and asset should be our employees... in their continued effort on employee initiatives for the betterment of the agency.

I look forward to continued collaboration and networking with you and the agency.

Take care and keep in touch! My email address is Rebecca_delaTorre@fws.gov.

Muchisimas Gracias.